

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

UNCLAS DHAKA 001281

SIPDIS

FOR I/FW, B/G, IIP/G/NEA-SA, B/VOA/N (BANGLA SERVICE) STATE
FOR SA/PAB, SA/PPD (LSCENSNY, SSTRYKER), SA/RA, INR/R/MR,
AND PASS TO USAID FOR ANE/ASIA/SA/B (WJOHNSON)

CINCPAC FOR PUBLIC DIPLOMACY ADVISOR, J51 (MAJ TURNER), J45
(MAJ NICHOLLS)

USARPAC FOR APOP-IM (MAJ HEDRICK)

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: KMDR OIIP OPRC KPAO PREL BG OCII

SUBJECT: REACTION TO SECRETARY'S REMARK ABOUT BANGLADESH

¶1. In her March 16 interview with "India Today" in New Delhi, Secretary Rice commented, "There is more that we probably need to do on Bangladesh which is, I think, a place that is becoming quite troubling."

¶2. The English and Bangla language media widely reported this statement. On March 20, eight Dhaka dailies printed variations of a Bangladeshi wire service report, but thus far there has been no editorial commentary. Several Bangla newspapers reported that Secretary Rice had termed Bangladesh a "failed state." One paper, however, reported that the media had erroneously translated the interview and that only the interviewer had used the term "failed state."

¶3. On March 21, local media reported that officials of the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party insisted that while Bangladesh has "problems," the international focus should be on Bangladesh's achievements, including the development of parliamentary democracy and increased life expectancy. An opposition Awami League party official commented that Rice's words echo what they have been articulating for the last three years. A Jatiya party official agreed with Secretary Rice's assessment, blaming the alliance government and the rise of militancy for the nation's difficulties.

¶4. Some commentators objected to the Secretary's reported comment that "there is more that we probably need to do on Bangladesh" because, they said, of the implication that India would be partly responsible for overseeing Bangladesh.

¶5. One pro-opposition newspaper commented, "U.S. Secretary of State Rice [said that]. the U.S. will intervene in Bangladesh's affairs, but not alone, together with India." This article speculated that PM Khaleda Zia might rebuke Secretary Rice for commenting on domestic affairs, as she

SIPDIS

has done recently to foreign diplomats and donors.

¶6. COMMENT: Several senior BDG officials asked us for clarification or confirmation of the Secretary's remarks. There sensitivity is not over the remarks per se, since U.S. concerns about Bangladesh are well known, but about where they were made.